

BCGEU CHILD CARE CAMPAIGN TOOLBOX 3: Building a network

Networking checklist

- Make a list of groups which may support the campaign
- Decide just what is realistic in the way of support
- Respect each group's decision-making process
- Ask for a chance to speak at local events
- Ask for an answer as soon as possible
- Stay in touch
- Advertise your allies
- Form a coalition committee
- Keep doors open
- Evaluate

HOW TO BUILD A NETWORK

Networking means getting to know people in different organizations so that you have a network of people who will help you with the campaign.

It is one of the most important activities of any campaign. It not only helps your campaign reach its objectives, it also gets your union/organization known to more people in the community.

Here are some basic principles of networking:

Make a list of groups which may support the campaign.

Divide your list into two categories: Groups that will almost certainly support you, and groups that would probably support you.

Go to your strength list

Concentrate right away on groups which will definitely support the campaign. Other unions, the NDP, environmental and service groups, church, teacher, farm and seniors' organizations should be lined up before approaching groups which might not have positions on the issue. The more support you have, the more support you get.

Ask around

Your campaign activists probably belong to other organizations. Ask them to arrange a meeting with these other groups to discuss the campaign. Ask all sympathetic supporters for suggestions on who else should be approached. Everyone should be a recruiter. A good motto: "Each one reach one".

Ask for a chance to speak

Ask for time at an organization's meeting to briefly explain your campaign and answer questions. Come with literature and be as non-partisan as possible. If asked

what kind of support you want, be prepared to tell the groups exactly what you want.

Decide in advance just what is realistic in the way of support.

Asking for more than is possible for the group or person to give, either in activity or contributions, will turn them off.

Respect each group's decision-making process

Don't make any suggestions on how they should decide their position or support. If you encounter opposition at someone else's meeting, be polite. Best response: "I respect your point of view and your decision-making process. I appreciate being invited here to explain our campaign but I am happy to listen to any other position. That's what democracy is all about".

Politeness pays

If invited to speak at another organization's meeting, always follow up with a brief thank you letter, whether or not you were able to get their support.

Avoid getting involved in any way in the internal politics of another union or group. You will only damage your own cause.

Ask for an answer as soon as possible

Most groups will probably decide whether to support the campaign after you have left the meeting. Make sure they know where to reach you. Ask them for an answer as soon as possible, whatever way they decide.

Stay in touch

If you win support from any group, don't take it for granted. Name a person to stay in touch with and inform the group regularly. Key contacts in each supporting organization should be informed in advance of any campaign events.

Advertise your allies

Recognize groups which lend support of any kind. Be generous in your praise of them. Mentioning the names of supporting groups and high-profile individuals will give the campaign more credibility.

What should be the task of this committee? Let them decide that.

Form a coalition committee

If there is enough solid support in your community, consider forming a committee of leaders of supporting organizations. A sympathetic, well-known, prominent citizen is usually the best person to invite people into this committee.

Keep doors open

Never badmouth an opponent or non-supporter in your own community. You may, without thinking, offend a friend or relative who does support you. And you will have lost forever an opportunity to change his or her mind.

After the campaign...

Do some maintenance work on your network. Call and express your appreciation for any help and support. Keep a list of names and phone numbers. The next campaign may be sooner than you think.

Evaluate

Review your work and list the results, both good and bad.